

NORTHERNRIVERS

2021-2022

Student-Parent

Handbook

Neil Hellman School



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Welcome!

September 2021

Dear Students, Staff, Parents, and Guardians:

Welcome to the Neil Hellman School, a program of Northern Rivers Family of Services. We hope you will find your time here a positive one, with many opportunities for academic and social-emotional learning and personal growth for students and families.

Here we support each student as an individual, recognizing their strengths and unique talents, and identifying areas for growth. We foster a positive, nurturing community that supports students' social and emotional needs in a way that maximizes opportunities for success.

Every member of our team is united in our efforts to empower students and families to be meaningfully involved in our programs.

We look forward to a new school year and the opportunities it presents. Remember, every child is a story yet to be told.

Good luck and have a wonderful 2021–22 school year!

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Introduction

The Neil Hellman School (NHS) Student–Parent Handbook is your guide to a successful school year. Parents and students should read the handbook carefully, as it will help you understand what NHS has to offer you. It will also help you understand what is expected of students and parents to have a successful school year. If you have any questions not covered by this manual, please contact us at one of the numbers listed in the directory.

► **Mission**

NHS provides therapeutic services to at-risk students from throughout the Capital Region. The school is designed to help students maximally benefit from academic and social/emotional instruction. To do this, NHS meets each student's academic, emotional, and social needs in an integrated and respectful manner, recognizing each student's unique needs while promoting an empowering sense of community.

► **The School Day**

School hours are 8:45 a.m. to 2:45 p.m. each day. Day students are offered a nutritious breakfast on arrival to school. Classrooms participate in community meetings during homeroom.

► **Arrival and Dismissal**

Students report directly to homeroom upon arrival to school.

Those arriving after 9:15 a.m. or leaving before regular dismissal must be signed in/out at the main reception area by an approved adult.

All students must report directly to homeroom at the end of the academic day. Dismissal will begin as soon as the students are in homeroom and clear of the hallways.

Bell Schedule

Period	Begin	End
Homeroom	8:45 a.m.	9:10 a.m.
1st Period	9:13 a.m.	9:50 a.m.
2nd Period	9:53 a.m.	10:30 a.m.
3rd Period	10:33 a.m.	11:10 a.m.
4th Period	11:13 a.m.	11:50 a.m.
5th Period	11:53 a.m.	12:30 p.m.
6th Period	12:33 p.m.	1:10 p.m.
7th Period	1:13 p.m.	1:50 p.m.
8th Period	1:53 p.m.	2:30 p.m.
Homeroom	2:33 p.m.	2:45 p.m.

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Rights and Responsibilities

► Student Rights

Students have the right to:

- ✓ pursue an education in a safe and therapeutic environment
- ✓ feel empowered
- ✓ freedom of speech and expression
- ✓ due process in accordance with education law
- ✓ pursue an education in a safe and therapeutic environment

► Student Responsibilities

Students have the responsibility to:

- ✓ have peaceful relationships with one another and with staff
- ✓ behave safely and not endanger themselves or others
- ✓ do their best work
- ✓ follow directions
- ✓ behave lawfully
- ✓ be in assigned program activities under staff supervision at all times
- ✓ carry a pass with them throughout the school and campus
- ✓ attend school unless legally excused (see attendance policy)
- ✓ be in class, on time, and prepared to learn
- ✓ complete assignments to the best of their ability and ask for help when needed
- ✓ respect the property of the school, other students, and staff-owned items

► Parent and Guardian Responsibilities

Parents and guardians have the responsibility to:

- ✓ help their child become a responsible student
- ✓ reinforce appropriate attitudes toward school
- ✓ maintain academic and behavioral expectations for their child
- ✓ communicate with their child frequently and praise success
- ✓ keep the lines of communication open with school staff
- ✓ urge their child to practice good personal hygiene and dress appropriately
- ✓ follow through with agreements made with school staff
- ✓ directly problem-solve any concerns with school personnel and not in front of the student, so a united front is presented

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Assessments

► Reading and Math

Students who enter NHS are administered reading and math assessment tests, usually within a couple of weeks after starting school, to determine each student's overall academic skills, strengths, and achievements so staff can develop an educational program that best meets that student's individual needs. The tests cover areas related to schoolwork, such as vocabulary knowledge, reading comprehension, spelling, and math computation and application skills.

► Psychological

Upon referral to the Committee on Special Education (CSE), or for previously identified students once every 3 years, a psychological evaluation will be administered. The evaluation(s) may include a student interview, review of education records, assessments of the student's behavioral and social-emotional functioning, and assessments of general intellectual functioning. The psychological evaluation(s) is not to assign grades or make value judgments about the student; rather, the results provide additional information to help the educational staff better understand the student's educational, behavioral, and social strength and needs. This allows the treatment team to plan and/or modify the student's treatment goals and strategies to increase opportunities for behavioral and academic success.

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Comprehensive Attendance Policy

The Neil Hellman School is committed to providing a safe and supportive learning environment for all students that addresses their educational needs. We expect all students to attend school regularly to maximize learning opportunities. Our attendance policy aims to support parents and students in attending school every day.

Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each school day prior to the first period of instruction, at the beginning of each scheduled class period throughout the day, and on class and/or school field trips.

If your child is absent, you must call the attendance office at **518.426.2810**. When calling, please be prepared to leave the following information:

- ✓ Student's name
- ✓ Student's grade level
- ✓ Your name and telephone number where you can be reached if there are questions regarding the absence

The attendance phone number is accessible 24 hours a day. If your child is absent from school and we do not receive a call by 9:30 a.m., the school nurse will contact you to confirm your child's absence from school.

School absences tend to fall into one of the following categories:

- ✓ excused
- ✓ unexcused
- ✓ suspension
- ✓ tardiness
- ✓ early departure
- ✓ snow days
- ✓ safe school violation
- ✓ half days

► Absence from School

Excused absences include the following reasons:

- ✓ medical reasons (e.g., sickness, family illness, doctor's appointments, hospitalizations)

- ✓ family visits or family emergency
- ✓ religious observance
- ✓ court, probation, or other legal matters
- ✓ approved work program or college visits
- ✓ program decision (i.e., mutual agreement between the principal and the parent/guardian)
- ✓ home school district closed
- ✓ summer vacation (up to 10 days will be considered during July and August with prior agreement of the student's treatment team.)

Any other reason for a student absence, tardiness, or early departure is considered an **unexcused absence**. Examples of unexcused absences include but are not limited to:

- ✓ refusal to attend
- ✓ skipping school
- ✓ oversleeping
- ✓ missing the bus

► **Suspensions**

Formal school suspension is determined by the building principal.

► **Tardiness**

A student who arrives after 9:15 a.m. is considered tardy. Tardiness may be either excused or unexcused.

► **Early Departure**

Students who leave after 2.5 hours of school are considered an early departure.

► **Multi-Tiered System of Support**

A multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) is in place to assist students who consistently miss school. This system is an effort to break down barriers to good attendance, provide supportive assistance to families, and encourage students to attend school. If added assistance is needed from the Neil Hellman School staff, please contact a member of the student's treatment team or an administrator.

► **Student Drop-Off and Pick-Up**

All students not arriving or departing via district transportation **must** be signed in and out at the main office. This includes students arriving late or being dismissed early. Before a student is released, an approved person at least age 18 must show appropriate identification.

► **Snow Days**

If the Albany City School District is closed or delayed due to inclement weather or other reason, the Neil Hellman School is closed. Student absence is also excused if the home school district does not provide transportation. Please see local television stations or news websites for lists of closings and delays.

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School Curriculum, Grading, and Report Cards

Neil Hellman School courses are delineated by formal curricula for each part of the school as well as for each subject. This curriculum follows both the New York state and Common Core learning standards.

We support the practice of specially designed instruction and strive to offer materials and instruction that best adapt to each student's readiness level, interests, and learning style.

Each course is designed to ensure students are exposed to the Common Core and prepare students for success on New York state assessments and Regents exams.

Subjects taught include English language arts, math, science, social studies, technology, health, physical education, music, art and vocational preparation.

Unless specified in a student's individualized education program (IEP), all students participate in the same New York State assessments administered to general education students, including elementary and middle school assessments and high school Regents exams

New York State Assessment Dates 2021–2022

Dates	Assessment
January 25–28	High School Regents
March 29–31	Grade 3 & 8 ELA
April 28–28	Grade 3 & 8 Math
May 24–June 3	Grade 4 & 8 Science Lab Exam
June 1	U.S. History/Government Regents
June 6	Grade 4 & 8 Science
June 15–23	High School Regents

► Homework

The Neil Hellman School community believes that homework serves a variety of beneficial purposes for students. It allows students to practice and reinforce learned skills, develop good work habits and sense of responsibility, encourage independent work, pre-set for upcoming lessons, and helps reinforce the school-home connection so that parents and

guardians can share in the student's school life and to encourage independent work. Additionally, time at home for schoolwork can assist a student in catching up on work.

Therefore, the Neil Hellman School community supports the position that students should do outside schoolwork to reinforce skills learned in class, as well as to learn responsibility, but that homework should be determined by the team, according to the special, individual needs of each student.

To help students adjust to the academic demands of school and homework assignments, the Neil Hellman School offers an academic support period five times a week when students and their teachers can meet and review more challenging skills.

► **Quarterly Grades**

Student grades take into account classwork, assessments, and participation. At the high school level, homework is also factored into student grades.

► **Midterm and Final Exams**

High school students take midterm exams in English, math, social studies, and science. In addition, final exams are given in the high school for these courses when no Regents exam is scheduled.

Students in grades 3–8 take midterm and final exams in math and English.

All student testing accommodations are followed for midterm and final exams.

► **Final Course Grade**

The final average for a full-year course is determined by averaging the four quarterly grades, the midterm, and the final exam (when applicable). For a semester course, the two quarter marks and midterm or final (when applicable) will be averaged.

► **Incomplete Grades and Make-Up Work**

Missed work due to excused absences other than hospitalizations may result in a grade of "incomplete." When a student does not come to class or chooses not to do the work in class, the resulting report card grade will be "incomplete." The student will be given 5 weeks from the last day of the marking period to complete assignments in question. The student will be advised of this policy and reissued the work, if necessary, by the teacher.

Student must complete any schoolwork missed due to excused absences, home visits, medical appointments, or meeting with social workers.

► **Marking Periods**

The Neil Hellman School is a year-round program. Students have 4 marking periods during the school year followed by a 6-week summer program. During the school year copies of report cards are mailed to parents and guardians. Parents also receive an IEP update every 10 weeks.

► Credit Recovery

We offer credit recovery as an option for students who do not pass a class. It is available during our 6-week summer session for up to two classes. If a student fails three or more core classes, they will need to repeat that year.

In addition to the 22 credits required for graduation, there are exams and activities that can lead to graduation. Following are the exiting credentials offered by New York state and the Neil Hellman School.

► Graduation Requirements

Graduation Requirements		
Subjects	Credits	Classes Offered
English	4	English 9, 10, 11*, 12
Social Studies	4	Global Studies 9, 10* U.S. History* Government Economics
Science	3	Living Environment (+Lab)* Earth Science (+Lab)* Science 11
Math	3	Algebra 1A, Algebra 1B* Geometry* Consumer Math Functional Algebra/Math
Physical Education	2**	Physical Education 9–12
Health	.5	Health
Art/Music	1	Studio Art Music in Our Lives
Electives and Additional Classes	4.5	Foundations Career and Financial Management School-Based Enterprises Senior Project Vocational or Life Skills

*These classes have a corresponding New York state Regents exam.

**Each year is .5 credit.

► Types of Diplomas and Credentials

Regents Diploma

To earn a Regents diploma, a score of 65 or higher is required on five Regents exams:

- ✓ 1 science exam
- ✓ 1 math exam
- ✓ 1 social studies exam
- ✓ 1 English exam
- ✓ 1 pathway (A pathway can be another science exam, another social studies exam, or another math exam.)

Local Diploma

To earn a Local diploma, a score of 55 to 64 on any one or more of the following Regents exams:

- ✓ 1 science exam
- ✓ 1 math exam
- ✓ 1 social studies exam
- ✓ 1 English exam
- ✓ 1 pathway (In this case the pathway can be an additional exam **or** the successful completion of a career development and occupational studies, or CDOS, credential. The requirements for the CDOS credential are listed below.)

Career Development and Occupational Studies Commencement Credential

This certification requires 216 hours of vocational experiences including:

- ✓ volunteering
- ✓ service learning
- ✓ on-campus work opportunities
- ✓ job shadowing
- ✓ at least 54 hours of off-campus work-based learning experiences
- ✓ at least 12 years of education, including kindergarten
- ✓ career plan
- ✓ employability profile

Superintendent's Determinations

Superintendent determinations are an additional option available to students with disabilities. Parents can request these, and they are reviewed by a panel of teachers. The panel will look at the course grades, student attendance, a work portfolio, and any use of extra help. Options are:

- ✓ Superintendent's determination with a pass or low pass on the English exam and the math exam
- ✓ Superintendent's determination using the CDOS CC

Students and parents are also allowed to appeal of a Regents exam. If a student has attempted the exam at least two times and scored at least a 52 on one attempt, a panel of teachers will look at course grades, attendance, seeking of extra help, and the work portfolio.

Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential

This is the exiting credential offered to students who are classified as "alternative assessment" on their IEP.

Importantly, the Career Development and Occupational Studies Commencement Credential and the Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential are not high school diplomas and cannot be used to gain acceptance into a college program.



Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports

The Neil Hellman School's Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program features Pennies for Points. Students earn points (i.e., pennies) during each period of the school day. A teacher or a teaching assistant reviews with each student the number of points earned for each category. Points are related to the following goals:

- ✓ Be safe
- ✓ Be respectful
- ✓ Be there and be ready
- ✓ School goal
- ✓ Treatment goal

Points are earned on a 0–2 scale: 2 = mostly; 1 = some; 0 = not yet.

At the end of every day, students receive one “penny” for every point earned. These pennies add up to Dragon dollars, which are not real money but school dollars that can be used for activities, including visiting the school store, attending planned activities, and buying items at the holiday bazaar. Importantly, New York state law mandates that students may visit the store **only** after receiving a school lunch.

Every other month, the school organizes fun activities, such as a visit to the Pumpkin Patch, movies, games such as kickball, or a pizza party. A “price” is set for the event, and students who meet the basic attendance and behavior requirements can choose to spend their Dragon dollars to participate in the activity.

To participate in the activity a student must:

- ✓ have enough Dragon dollars
- ✓ have no **unexcused** absences within the prior 10 days
- ✓ have no suspensions or negative alternative programming room (APR) comments within the prior 10 days

New students must accumulate 10 days of attendance prior to being eligible for a PBIS activity.

“Gotchas” are another way we acknowledge positive student behaviors. Teachers and staff award a Gotcha ticket to students who are following school and classroom expectations. These are awarded multiple times a day. Each month all the tickets are entered into a drawing. There are separate drawings for elementary, middle, and high school students.

Behavior Matrix – How to Earn 2 Points

	Be There, Be Ready	Be Safe	Be Respectful	Do Your Best
Classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – In the room when bell rings – Have materials with you – Complete work during assigned times – Choose and maintain your space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Wear your face mask – Stay 6 feet away from other people – Keep hands feet, objects to self – Use all equipment & materials for intended use – Clean shared materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Follow staff directions – Use kind words – Value others' right to learn – Understand people's differences – Be aware of personal space, keep 6 feet apart – Always ask and receive permission from staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ask for help when needed – Listen to directions – Work on your goals
Hallways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Walk in the hallways – Go directly to next class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Wear your face mask – Stay 6 feet away from other people – Walk in halls – Hands feet, objects to self 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Treat school property with care – Use quiet voices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Follow directions
Cafeteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Be in the cafeteria for the entire period – Be with staff member 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Wear your face mask when not eating – Stay 6 feet away from other people – Remain seated – Keep all food/ utensils to self 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Clean your area – Use kind words to peers and staff – Choose and maintain your space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Follow directions – Make healthy choices – Use good table manners
Outside	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Be in sight of staff at all times – Follow staff directions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Wear your face mask – Stay 6 feet away from other people – Follow rules of the game 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Place litter in garbage cans – Leave area cleaner than you found it – Be kind to plants and animals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Follow directions – Have fun – Be cooperative with others
Assemblies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Sit in your assigned area – Be on time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Wear your face mask – Stay 6 feet away from other people – Hands feet, objects to self 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Stay seated until your class is dismissed – Listen – Follow directions – Be polite to guests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Follow directions – Try to appreciate something different
Breakroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Arrive at assigned time – Have a staff member or pass – Return directly to your class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Wear your face mask – Stay 6 feet away from other people – Hands feet, objects to self – Follow staff directions – Clean shared materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Be flexible if staff is unavailable – Mind your own business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Follow directions – Relax and enjoy the break
Off Campus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Stay with staff member – Follow staff directions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Wear your face mask – Stay 6 feet away from other people – Stay with staff – Follow the rules of the site visiting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Thank host/staff of location visited – Appreciate a different surrounding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Follow directions – Learn something new
Clinic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Take meds at assigned times – Wait until door is unlocked 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Wear your face mask – Stay 6 feet away from other people – Take meds as prescribed by doctor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Wait quietly in the hallway – Use kind words and actions toward clinic staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Follow directions – Be kind
Bus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Be in your homeroom at dismissal – Stay in homeroom until called – Go directly to your bus when called 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Wear your face mask – Stay 6 feet away from other people – Stay seated at all times – Wear seatbelts properly – Listen to the driver and aide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Listen to the driver and the aide. – Choose and maintain your space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Follow directions
Day Treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Attend all scheduled appointments – Arrive on time for appointments – Check in with secretaries and let them know who you are there to see 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Wear your face mask – Stay 6 feet away from other people – Keep hands, feet and objects to yourself 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Use an “inside volume” speaking voice – Use kind words – Allow others privacy – Allow others personal space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ask for help when needed – Work to achieve your goals



Vocational Program

►► **Work ♦ Learn ♦ Earn ♦ Achieve**

All students at Neil Hellman School are encouraged to participate in the Vocational Program.

The Vocational Program allows students to learn job readiness skills, gain experience, integrate communication and social skills, increase their confidence and independence, practice teamwork, and contribute their skills to the school community.

Students are responsible for maintaining a timecard during the month and turning it in to receive their paycheck. Once a month, students take home money they earned from their work.

More than 30 job opportunities are available, including art room assistant, lunch delivery person, poster and bulletin board creator, Bella Greenhouse worker, van cleaner, and silverware sorter.

High school students have opportunities to work off campus in the community. These opportunities range from sorting food at the Regional Food Bank to bagging groceries at a local Price Chopper/Market 32.

The Vocational Program staff works with all students to find a job where they are able to Work ♦ Learn ♦ Earn ♦ Achieve during the school day.

► **Food Outreach Program**

Neil Hellman School understands there are times when students and families may need additional food at home. If you have a need, please reach out to classroom staff or your child's clinician.

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Student Policies and Procedures

► Student Passes

Students are expected to be in classes during academic instruction. We recommend teachers limit student passes to the greatest extent possible and that, if possible, classroom staff directly supervise students, even when a pass is issued.

- ✓ Students **must** carry a pass if **not** with an adult.
- ✓ Teachers should monitor the number of passes a student requests. If a student exceeds a reasonable number of passes, the treatment team may suspend the pass privilege.
- ✓ Passes will indicate when a student leaves class, the destination, and the expected return time.

► Student Breaks

Breaks are a way to help students calm down or relax when they feel that they are going to lose control or fall apart.

Students should use their Self-Care Plan in class options first!

How to take a break:

1. The student must ask his/her teacher for permission to take a break.
2. Take an in-class break first.
3. Breaks last 5–10 minutes.
4. Limit breaks to one morning and one afternoon break.
5. Students who take an out-of-class break must stay with classroom staff and avoid roaming.
6. If a student is upset, they should practice a self-control skill during the walk.

► Positive Break Rooms

Students occasionally need time away from a stressful situation. Rooms for this purpose are available and are staffed by Behavior Support staff.

Here, students can take time to calm down and relax. Classroom staff and Behavior Support staff are also available to help students think through what is upsetting them and interfering with their ability to maintain themselves in the classroom.

► School Nurse

School nurses provide basic first aid to students. Medical issues that require greater care will be referred home.

When school is dismissed early, the nursing staff will administer all medications up to 12 p.m. Doses later in the day will need to be administered at home.

Students with contagious illness and symptoms of illness, such as vomiting, a fever over 100.0°F, and diarrhea, should remain home from school. We welcome students back in school when they have been symptom free for 24 hours.

► Healthy Schools

If your student brings food from home, we ask that you help us by sending “healthy food options” to school for lunch or snack time.

Energy drinks and caffeinated beverages are not permitted at school because these items can negatively affect the health of our children.

► Behavior Support Staff

Behavior Support staff have a unique role in the Neil Hellman School. Together with classroom teachers, their primary task is to provide support to young people in need of a break, a talk, or a distraction from things that are preventing them from having a successful day or class period at school. These specialists are also responsible for guiding students through responses to behaviors that happen over the school day, including the enforcement of school-issued consequences.

Behavior Support staff are trained in methods of problem-solving that help young people resolve differences with each other or with teaching staff. These methods include mediation, restorative justice, and life-space interviewing. These methods have been successful in relieving stress created by conflicts and assist with the development of social skills and life skills.

► Alternate Programming Room

The Neil Hellman School alternative programming room (APR) is designed to provide students with behavioral support and remediation. The environment and stimulus that may have contributed to the behavior are minimized by limiting interaction with peers. While in this classroom, teachers and clinicians coordinate with students regarding academic and emotional support.

In addition to academic assignments, students assigned to APR complete protocols and assignments designed to teach replacement behaviors for less desirable behavior.

If APR is assigned for the next school day, a member of the student's treatment team will call home to ensure the student and parent are both aware. While in APR, students may earn up to 100% of daily points.

► **The Neil Hellman Library and Media Center**

The Neil Hellman School Library and Media Center collection includes a wide range of materials for students in Grades K-12, including books, magazines, and DVDs. Most materials circulate for two weeks and can be renewed for another two weeks. There are fines for materials returned late or not returned. Please return materials promptly so others can use them.

The Library and Media Center also includes an electronic library with 10 computer stations, which can be signed out for individual or classroom use.

There are often free give-away materials that staff and students can browse to find items they can keep.

► **High School Dances**

High school dances and prom are open to all NHS high school students. All guests must be current high school students and must be pre-approved by a Neil Hellman School administrator.

Although NHS administrators and staff would like to see all high school students attend these special events, students with significant behavioral challenges during the week preceding the event might be asked not to participate. An NHS administrator, in consultation with the student's clinician, may decide a student's behavior is too unsafe to permit attendance.

If a student is unable to attend the event due to behavioral or safety concerns, the student's parent(s) or guardian(s) will be notified by a school administrator.

Students are expected to go home at dismissal time and return for the event. Students are not allowed to stay after school unless specific permission is granted by the high school principal.

► **Visitors to School**

The Neil Hellman School welcomes visitors. We recognize the importance of parent involvement in their children's education, and we encourage parents, as well as others, in fostering positive home, school and community relationships. The school also considers the safety of its students and staff to be one of its highest priorities. We feel that we have a strong obligation to provide a safe, secure learning environment in our school.

The following procedures are in effect in the Neil Hellman School building, and we ask your cooperation in following them. Our objective is to promote a safe and welcoming learning environment for all learners.

- ✓ All visitors are required to wear masks and use the main entrance to the building.
- ✓ All visitors will be greeted at the reception area immediately upon entering the school building.

- ✓ All visitors, including those whose visits are pre-arranged, will be asked to sign a visitors' log. Visitors will be given a visitor's pass identifying the purpose of the visit, as well as the time and location of the visit.
- ✓ Visitors are required to sign out in the visitors' log.
- ✓ If parents/guardians need to deliver lunch, homework, or some other item that a student needs, please bring it to the reception area. The office manager will arrange to get the item to the student.
- ✓ If a parent/guardian wishes to visit their child's classroom to volunteer, arrangements must be made through the school administrators and teacher, who will indicate the best time for such activities and required training.



Transportation

► School Bus Procedure

Appropriate student behavior during the transportation of students to and from school is of the highest importance in guaranteeing the safety of not only the students, but also the staff. For this reason, the following procedures are in effect for all students:

- ✓ **Students must ride their assigned bus or van to and from school each day.**
Any student not riding their normal bus or van must have written permission from their parent or guardian in consultation with the student's treatment team.
- ✓ Students must wear seat belts and masks at all times.
- ✓ Students must behave in a safe and orderly manner.
- ✓ Parents are asked to contact their district's transportation department AND send in a written note whenever there is a change in normal transportation procedure. Any child not picked up by dismissal time will be sent home via normal bus transportation.

► Bicycles

- ✓ Students must have written permission from a parent/guardian in conjunction with the treatment team before bringing a bicycle to school.
- ✓ Bikes must be stored and locked during the school day.
- ✓ Helmets must be worn on school grounds.
- ✓ Owners are responsible for bicycles that are damaged or stolen.

► Walking Home

Students must have written permission from a parent/guardian in conjunction with the treatment team prior to walking to and from school. A student's home district will be contacted regarding this method of arrival or dismissal.

► Driving to School

Students wishing to drive to school must have written permission from a parent/guardian in conjunction with the treatment team to drive on campus. Any student requesting this privilege will be required to sign a contract developed in conjunction with the treatment team.

The Transportation coordinator may be reached at 518.426.2805.



Student Behavior and Management

► No Smoking

To continue to promote and maintain the health of all students in accordance with NYS Public Health Law and the Federal Pro Children Act, Neil Hellman School is a tobacco-free campus. Tobacco-free means that the use or possession of tobacco products is not permitted in any form indoors or on the facility grounds.

Students are not permitted to use or possess tobacco products on the 60 Academy Road campus or in Northern Rivers–owned or -leased vehicles.

Students who violate this protocol will be subject to consequences as outlined in the Neil Hellman School Code of Conduct. Violations should be documented in the school database under the category of “contraband.”

► Student Supervision

Students at Neil Hellman School are supervised at all times. If a student leaves educational programming without permission, they are considered “truant/out of program.” When this occurs, a behavior support staff is notified, and together with homeroom staff, they attempt to keep the student within eyesight.

Students who cannot be located with reasonable efforts are considered “missing.” In these cases appropriate individuals, including parents/guardians and, when appropriate, the Albany Police Department, will be notified.

► Sharing of Items

Students at the Neil Hellman School are not to lend, borrow, trade, or sell any items in school.

► Abuse and Neglect

NHS Staff are mandated reporters. Any time abuse or neglect is suspected, our staff must contact the appropriate agencies and authorities.

If an allegation is made involving your child, you will be notified with pertinent information.

► Physical Interventions

All NHS staff are trained in the use of physical interventions, which may be used during situations of imminent danger to a student or staff member.

A transition time-out room is available for all students (except those from the Residential Treatment Facility) if this behavior management technique is identified in a child's IEP. Parents may view this room if requested.

► Bullying

The Neil Hellman School is committed to providing an educational and working environment that promotes dignity and respect. All forms of bullying and harassment are prohibited on school grounds and at all school-sponsored activities and events.

Discrimination, harassment or bullying that takes place at locations outside of school grounds, including cyber bullying, which endanger the health, welfare, or safety of students or the educational process are prohibited.

The Dignity for All Students Act (§§10-18 of Education Law), or DASA, defines bullying and harassment as the creation of a hostile environment by conduct, verbal threats, intimidation, or abuse, including cyber bullying that:

- (a) has or would have the effect of unreasonably and substantially interfering with a student's educational performance, opportunities or benefits; or mental, emotional and/ or physical well-being;
- (b) reasonably causes or would reasonably be expected to cause a student to fear for his or her physical safety;
- (c) reasonably causes or would reasonably be expected to cause physical injury or emotional harm to a student;
- (d) occurs off school property and creates or would foreseeably create a risk of substantial disruption within the school environment, where it is foreseeable that the conduct, threats, intimidation or abuse might reach school property.

The harassing behavior may be based on any characteristic, including but not limited to a person's actual or perceived:

- ✓ race
- ✓ color
- ✓ weight
- ✓ national origin
- ✓ ethnic group
- ✓ religion
- ✓ religious practice
- ✓ disability
- ✓ sex
- ✓ sexual orientation
- ✓ gender (including gender identity and expression)

Any student or staff member who believes a student has been subjected to bullying or harassment within the meaning of this policy shall report the bullying or threats to a teacher or an administrator immediately. A school administrator will immediately take the appropriate

disciplinary actions, including investigation of bullying incidents, completion of the Bullying Protocol, suspension, and school district notification when indicated.

► Dress Code

If you are in doubt about the clothing, *please* do not wear it to school.

Everyone entering the school is asked to be respectful of the dress standards we have established for the students and staff. Below is a summary of our guidelines.

- ✓ Torn, ragged, excessively dirty, or revealing clothing is not permitted.
- ✓ Tops must completely cover the torso, chest, sides, midriff, or belly and back, as well as undergarments. T-shirts can be worn on special event days only.
- ✓ Bottoms must be longer than the bottom of the fingertips when arms are at a student's side. They are expected to completely cover undergarments (not allow for the display of underwear or bare skin). Leggings and tights must be worn with a top that completely covers the hips and backside.
- ✓ Pajamas, lounge pants, and slippers are not appropriate for school days.
- ✓ Footwear should be appropriate for the activities the student is expected to participate in each day.
- ✓ Open-toe shoes are not acceptable for physical education class and certain job sites.
- ✓ No vulgar, obscene, libelous, gang-related, degrading, discriminatory, or harassing content on clothing is allowed. Clothing may not promote and/or endorse the use of alcohol, tobacco, or illegal drugs and/or encourage other illegal or violent activities.
- ✓ All items not needed for the academic day, including but not limited to coats, cell phones, headphones, and other electronic devices, are to be safely stored for the duration of the school day.
- ✓ Swimwear: Males must have swim trunks (no regular shorts or athletic shorts). Females must have a full coverage swimsuit.

Anyone who violates the dress code will be *required* to modify their appearance by covering or removing the offending item, and, if necessary or practical, replacing it with an acceptable item.

► Electronics

Students are not allowed to have cell phones, wireless communication devices, and other electronic devices in school.

We understand that many students travel long distances to get to and from school and may need their devices for the bus ride.

Upon arrival, each student will approach a table in the main hallway. Behavioral support and school and day treatment staff will be present to greet each student and ask if they have any electronics or other items not needed for the school day. Students will be provided a safe, secure location to store these items during the school day. All items will be returned to students at the end of the school day.

Guidelines

- ✓ Electronic devices and other items will be put into a Ziploc bag with the student's name on it.
- ✓ All Ziploc bags will be stored in a safe and secure location until dismissal. Students will not have access to these devices or other items during the school day.

If a student refuses to give up his or her device their parent or guardian will be called for assistance. If the student continues to refuse to comply, disciplinary actions, including the use of a side office, re-entry meetings, and suspension, may be necessary.

Parents who wish to contact their child during the school day should either call their child's clinician or the main school office at 518.426.2827. The school administrative assistant will take a message and ensure, whenever possible, that your child receives the message within a reasonable amount of time.

Students who need to make a phone call may do so using a side office phone, with the permission of homeroom staff. Staff must be present during the phone call.

All classrooms have access to MP3 players for student use, per their personal coping plans.

► Important Information

Students age 18 and older are expected to follow the same rules, regulations, and guidelines in effect for all other students.

The Neil Hellman School is **not** responsible for any items lost, stolen, or damaged during the school day. Parents and guardians are asked to limit the amount of money a student brings to school to just a few dollars.

Appendix A

Staff Directory

Asst. Superintendent

Ms. Lawyer
Emily.Lawyer@nrfs.org
518.426.2607

Principal

Mr. Zadoorian
Jan.Zadoorian@nrfs.org
518.426.2628

Asst. Principal

Mr. Jackson
David.Jackson@nrfs.org
518.426.2769

School Nurse

Ms. Gabriel
Jennifer.Gabriel@nrfs.org
518.426.2721

Transportation

Mr. Keaton
Emory.Keaton@nrfs.org
518.426.2805

Guidance

Ms. Clark
Courtney.Clark@nrfs.org
518.426.2770

Special Education/CSE

Mr. Le
Chris.Le@nrfsf.org
518.426.2776

Administrative Assistant

Ms. McMillan
Shakeba.McMillan@nrfs.org
518.426.2827

Administrative Assistant

Ms. McMillan
Shakeba.McMillan@nrfs.org
518.426.2827

Administrative Assistant

Ms. McMillan
Shakeba.McMillan@nrfs.org
518.426.2827

Day Treatment Nurse

518.426.2745

Administrative Assistant

Mr. Brown
Michael.Brown@nrfs.org
518.426.2810

Administrative Assistant

Ms. McMillan
Shakeba.McMillan@nrfs.org
518.426.2827

Administrative Assistant

Ms. McNeil
Sherri.McNeil@nrfs.org
518.426.2766

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Appendix B

Acronyms and Initialisms

Following are the acronyms and initialisms used in this handbook.

APR	alternative programming room
DASA	Dignity for All Students Act
CDOS CC	Career Development and Occupational Studies Commencement Credential
CSE	Committee on Special Education
IEP	individualized education program
MTSS	multi-tiered system of support
NHS	Neil Hellman School
PBIS	Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports
PINS	persons in need of supervision

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Appendix C

Student Code of Conduct

In the interest of safety and the good of the school community, the following behaviors are prohibited, and a student may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including suspension and expulsion from school. The behaviors are prohibited at school, on school property and school transportation, as well as at school functions and school-sponsored activities.

A. Drugs, Alcohol and Other Illegal Substance

1. The unauthorized use, possession, sale, transfer or distribution of alcohol, drugs (prescription, non-prescription, and illegal) and drug paraphernalia is strictly prohibited. The disciplinary penalty to be imposed may be reduced if a student provides information leading to the person who supplied the alcohol, drugs, or other illegal paraphernalia.
2. Any person shall be held accountable if exhibiting drug-related activity, behavior, conduct, or personal or physical characteristics indicative of having used or consumed alcohol, drugs and/or illegal substances. This also applies to any person whom school personnel have reasonable grounds to suspect has used alcohol, drugs and/or illegal substances.
3. The director of education or a designee may impose formal suspension and/or notification to appropriate law enforcement officials. Parents/guardians shall be promptly notified.
4. Medications (prescriptive and non-prescriptive) may only be given to a student by nursing staff or by school personnel who are certified to dispense medication.
5. Any student suspected to be under the influence will be required to report to the clinic for an evaluation. (See student drug use evaluation protocol.)

B. Weapons, Firearms and Dangerous Objects

1. No person shall bring, possess, carry, transfer, display, store, touch, or use any weapon, firearm, or dangerous object on school property or at a school function.
2. When staff suspects a youth is carrying a weapon or object intended to cause physical harm, a search may be conducted following procedures outlined in the student search section. Since a youth who possesses a weapon or dangerous object poses a threat of the highest level, staff may conduct searches if they have reasonable suspicion of possession. Staff must first have the approval of the director of education (or designee) to conduct a search.
3. Lockers are the possession of the school and not students. Therefore, searches of all lockers and/or random searches may be authorized at the discretion of the director of education (or designee). Searches of individual lockers may be conducted when there is reason to suspect the student may be engaging in illicit activity at school.

C. Threats of Violence

1. Threats of violence include words or actions that may threaten to injure another person or property. No actual physical contact is necessary. Included is extended provocation leading to physical aggression.
2. Threats and dangerous behavior may be defined as creating a situation of substantial danger to a person or to property under circumstances where the person knows or should know that they are creating a dangerous situation. (This does not include physical aggression displayed in response to the initiation of physical interventions.) Examples include:
 - a. an act of force or uncontrolled behavior targeted at a school employee or any other person on school property or at a school function
 - b. an act of violence upon another student while on school property or at a school function
 - c. knowingly and intentionally damaging or destroying school property of substantial value or employee vehicles

D. False Alarm Procedures

The activation of a fire alarm pull station resulting in a false alarm unnecessarily precipitates the evacuation of the entire building. This constitutes criminal behavior. More important, this could create a grave risk to safe operations, both at the school and in the wider community. If the fire department has to respond to a false alarm, it could result in help being unavailable at a true life-threatening emergency. From a safety perspective, creating this type of situation cannot be tolerated.

1. First Instance of generating a false alarm: A three-day school suspension will be imposed at the first instance. This timeframe allows for a mandatory treatment team meeting that will consider the child's mental health needs, the circumstances surrounding the occurrence, the appropriate response, and steps to prevent re-occurrence upon the child's return to school programming. One response to consider would be use of emergency personnel to educate children on the safety risks of such behavior. The treatment team also will make a recommendation on the advisability of pressing criminal charges for the event. As the 3-day suspension is initiated to allow for thoughtful planning, there should be no interruption of clinical services by other programs.
2. Second Instance of generating a false alarm: Any second infraction within a 12-month period will result in a 5-day suspension, automatic pressing of charges, and mandatory treatment team planning. Should injury to others occur as a result of a false alarm, more serious consequences may occur.

E. Response Procedure for Code of Conduct Violations

1. Any staff person who witnesses a destructive behavior will immediately notify an integration specialist supervisor or building principal.
2. The integration specialist supervisor or building principal will facilitate a response to the destructive behavior and assign the following tasks:
 - a. ensure safety to self and others

- b. inform administrative staff that destructive behavior has occurred
- c. suspend bus transportation, if applicable

F. Disciplinary Procedures for Violations of the Code of Conduct

1. Violations of the Code of Conduct may merit consequences at the discretion of school administrators. Students found to have violated the Code of Conduct may be subject to the following, either alone or in combination with one another:
 - a. notification to parent/guardian/caretaker
 - b. restitution
 - c. suspension from transportation
 - d. alternative programming room
 - e. notification to home school district
 - f. short-term (five school days or less) suspension from school
 - g. long-term (more than five school days) suspension from school
 - h. notification to appropriate law enforcement officials
 - i. referral for juvenile delinquency proceeding (PINS)
 - j. peer mediation/restorative justice conference

Note: Provisions of this section on student discipline are based on Part 201 of the Commissioner of Education regulations and section 3214 of the education law.

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